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451 And Brave New World For more than half a century science fiction writers have thrilled and challenged readers with visions of the future and future worlds. These authors offered an insight into what they expected man, society, and life to be like at some future time. One such author, Ray Bradbury, utilized this concept in his work, Fahrenheit 451, a futuristic look at a man and his role in society. Bradbury utilizes the luxuries of life in America today, in addition to various occupations and technological advances, to show what life could be like if the future takes a drastic turn for the worse. He turns man's best friend, the dog, against man, changes the role of public servants and changes the value of a person.

Aldous Huxley also uses the concept of society out of control in his science fiction novel Brave New World. Written late in his career, Brave New World also deals with man in a changed society. Huxley asks his readers to look at the role of science and literature in the future world, scared that it may be rendered useless and discarded. Unlike Bradbury, Huxley includes in his book a group of people unaffected by the changes in society, a group that still has religious beliefs and marriage, things no longer part of the changed society, to compare and contrast today's culture with his proposed futuristic culture.

But one theme that both Brave New World and Fahrenheit 451 use in common is the theme of individual discovery by refusing to accept a passive approach to life, and refusing to conform. In addition, the refusal of various methods of escape from reality is shown to be a path to discovery. In Brave New World, the main characters of Bernard Marx and the "Savage" boy John both come to realize the faults with their own cultures. In Fahrenheit 451 Guy

Montag begins to discover that things could be better in his society but, due to some uncontrollable events, his discovery happens much faster than it would have. He is forced out on his own, away from society, to live with others like himself who think differently than the society does. Marx, from the civilized culture, seriously questions the lack of history that his society has. He also wonders about the lack of books, banned because they were old and did not encourage the new culture.

By visiting a reservation, home of an "uncivilized" culture of savages, he is able to see first hand something of what life and society used to be like.

Afterwards he returns and attempts to incorporate some of what he saw into his work as an advertising agent. As a result with this contrast with the other culture, Marx discovers more about himself as well. He is able to see more clearly the things that had always set him on edge: the promiscuity, the domination of the government and the lifelessness in which he lived.

(Allen) John, often referred to as "the Savage" because he was able to leave the reservation with Marx to go to London to live with him, also has a hard time adjusting to the drastic changes. The son of two members of the modern society but born and raised on the reservation, John learned from his mother the values and the customs of the "civilized" world while living in a culture that had much different values and practices. Though his mother talked of the promiscuity that she had practiced before she was left on the reservation (she was accidentally left there while on vacation, much as Marx was) and did still practice it, John was raised, thanks to the people around him, with the belief that these actions were wrong.

Seeing his mother act in a manner that obviously reflected different values greatly affected and hurt John, especially when he returned with Marx to London. John loved his mother, but he, a hybrid of the two cultures, was stuck in the middle. (May) These concepts, human reaction to changes in their culture and questioning of these changes, are evident throughout the book. Huxley's characters either conform to society's demands for uniformity or rebel and begin a process of discovery; there are no people in the middle. By doing so, Huxley makes his own views of man and society evident. He shows that those who conform to the "brave new world" become less human, but those who actively question the new values of society discover truth about the society, about themselves, and about people in general. An example of this is Huxley's views of drugs as an escape. The conforming members of society used widely a drug called soma, which induces hallucinations and escapes from the conscious world for two to eight hour periods.

Those very few who didn't, John included, mainly did not because they thought the drug either unclean or an easy escape, one not needed in a society aiming at making life very simple. By refusing to "go along" in this escape from reality, John is ultimately able to break from society and define his own destiny. In Fahrenheit 451 Guy Montag, the main character, is able to see through the government and the official policies of his society. He does so by gradually beginning to question certain aspects of society which most simply accept as fact.

Montag's job as a fireman serves as a setting to show how many people passively accept the absurdity of their society. Instead of rushing to put out fires, as firemen today do, Montag rushes to start fires, burning the books

and homes of people reported to have books. This was considered by most people to be a respectable profession. But on different occasions Montag took a book out of burning homes and would from time to time read them.

From this, he begins to question the values of his society. Montag's marriage also serves a setting to contrast passive acceptance versus questioning of society's values. His marriage is not the happy kind that couples today experience but more like a coexistence. He and his wife live together and he supports her, though he apparently neither loves her a great deal or expects her to love him. This relationship and living arrangement, with its lack of love, is Bradbury's way of showing what life could be like if people not only stop communicating but stop thinking and choosing, thus losing control over their lives.

Montag and his wife continue to live together though people in that situation today would not hesitate to terminate such a relationship. Montag's wife apparently accepts this relationship because it is normal for the society in which she lives. (Wolfheim) Like Brave New World characters escaping from reality through the use of soma, Montag's wife, and many other characters, escape through watching a sophisticated form of television. This television system covers three of the walls of the Montag's TV room (they can't afford to buy the screen to cover the fourth wall), has a control unit that allows the watchers to interact with the characters on the program and another unit that inserts Mrs. Montag's name into specific places, thus creating the image they the characters are actually conversing with them. Montag's wife, having only a few friends and ones she rarely sees, spends much of her day in this room, watching a program called "The Family", a government sponsored program

that shows the viewers what life at home should be like. The problem with this is that Montag's wife takes the program as a substitute for reality. She is almost addicted to the program, much as people were with soma in Brave New World.

Bradbury uses this television and its programs as a way of showing the escape he is worried people will look for in the future. Without actively questioning society's values, he is concerned that people will look for ways to idly spend their time. But like Marx, Montag chooses not to take part in this addiction. By abstaining, he can see the effects its use has on the people around him, much as Marx and more importantly John the Savage saw in their culture.

Both authors try to show that with life made easier by strong government control and a lack of personal involvement people will no longer spend their time thinking, questioning or developing their own ideas. Through these various diversions from normal behavior in society, Marx, John the Savage and Guy Montag are able to see the truths behind the societies they live in and are able to learn about themselves. And though their discoveries meant that their lives would be changed forever, the authors succeeded in showing that the key to humanity lies in thinking and questioning. These men found themselves through their own discoveries, much as Bradbury and Huxley hope others will do.

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